

VZCZCXRO4231
PP RUEHPA
DE RUEHOS #0015 0101245
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 101245Z JAN 07
FM AMCONSUL LAGOS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8349
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA PRIORITY 8186
RUEHWR/AMEMBASSY WARSAW PRIORITY 0071
RUEHCD/AMCONSUL CIUDAD JUAREZ PRIORITY 0045
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL PRIORITY 0052

C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 000015

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/W
STATE FOR INR/AA
CIUDAD JUAREZ FOR DONNA BLAIR
ISTANBUL FOR TASHAWNA SMITH

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/11/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: LAGOS PDP ELECTS GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATE AMID
IRREGULARITIES

Classified By: Consul General Brian L. Browne for reasons 1.4 (b and d)

11. (C) Summary: Amid irregularities, Senator Musiliu Obanikoro emerged as the Lagos State People's Democratic Party (PDP) gubernatorial candidate on December 14. Obanikoro beat Hilda Williams, widow of slain gubernatorial aspirant Funso Williams. Obanikoro's success came in spite of the political maneuvering of PDP Vice-Chairman Bode George, who backed Williams, a political novice who had not until recently even resided in the state. Some observers claim George was the puppeteer of the Williams candidacy in hopes of becoming the eminence grise of a weakling governor. End summary.

12. (C) Formerly a close ally of Governor Tinubu who left Tinubu to join the PDP in 2004, Senator Musiliu Obanikoro emerged the Lagos State People's Democratic Party (PDP) gubernatorial candidate. The run-off was marred by vote tabulation irregularities. Obanikoro's camp levied accusations of fraud against PDP Vice-Chairman George for allegedly padding the tally in favor of Williams. The scene became a tense one. Enter a most unlikely hero -- Chairman of the PDP Board of Trustees Tony Anenih. The curmudgeon Anenih, whose name has become synonymous with political misconduct, brought order to the venue by ordering an accurate recount of the vote. Nullifying the initial announcement of Hilda Williams as winner, the PDP declared Obanikoro victorious in the run-off election, with 3,042 votes to Williams's 3,007. (Comment: Anenih's role shouldn't be seen as a penitent turning of a new leaf. What he did was more out of vindictiveness than virtue. There is no great love lost between Anenih and George. Both had been competing against each other for the distinction of being President Obasanjo's most effective, relentless political enforcer. Anenih, having lost the bid to control the gubernatorial nomination in his state (Edo), was loath to see George succeed in Lagos where he had failed in Edo. Moreover, by his actions, Anenih endeared himself to Obanikoro and this will increase his relevance since Lagos is the lone southwestern gubernatorial battleground that escaped the PDP in 2003 and which President Obasanjo wants to capture with a deep passion. End comment.)

13. (C) Obanikoro's victory came as a surprise to some insiders, who, earlier last week, propounded the likelihood of a Williams victory due to the backing of George. Ironically, some insiders believe George was involved in the husband's brutal murder last June. In an act that could only be described as pure cynicism alloyed by utmost hypocrisy,

George persuaded Hilda to run, according to these observers. Though a political neophyte, Hilda would and did easily inherit her husband's political machine and goodwill. However, George's calculations were not to see Hilda accomplish that which eluded her husband. George knew Hilda knew little about Lagos and its affairs. He wanted her to win so he could assume the role of Cardinal Richelieu of Lagos.

¶4. (C) Obanikoro's victory also may be due, in part, to his cordial relationship with Delta State Governor James Ibori. Insiders say Ibori, once a presidential outcast, has opened his ample purse and is now an active regular in PDP backroom discussions and decisionmaking. Additionally, Ibori is not a fan of George's.

Comment

¶5. (C) Comment: The PDP gubernatorial nomination process was tumultuous. In spite of this spate, the party will likely suffer few defections. Moreover, should Obanikoro and George mend fences and cooperate, they can form a rather mean, effective machine to challenge the fractured AC and Governor Tinubu's anointed successor, the politically awkward Babatunde Fashola. Obanikoro is well schooled in the brusque etiquette of Lagos street politics and George has never encountered a brawl he did not like. That the two men will continue scratching and clawing is certain. The question is whether they will continue fighting each other or join forces against the battered Tinubu machine. Either way, the political forecast for Lagos is one of tumult, abrasions and hard-ball antics. End comment.

BROWNE